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THE RESURRECTION OF
CHRISTENDOM

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GENERAL PREFACE

THIS series of books is designed to assist thought upon the relation of the Christian faith to present problems. We live in a changing society; it is still an open question what the outcome of change will be. It is the duty of Christians to be aware of what is happening and, while the situation is still fluid, to exercise their utmost influence upon the course of events. In politics the old party lines are vanishing, and new groups are being formed. Christians ought to play a decided part, both by thought and action, in these developments. Those who are collaborating in the "Christian News-Letter" and who are producing these books invite all men of goodwill to join with them in an attempt to understand the principles at stake and the policies which must be pursued.

We have got as a nation to do much more hard thinking than has been our wont. It has been said that "the average Englishman not only has no ideas, he hates an idea when he meets one." During the last hundred years our general security and the settled framework of our society have made thought about fundamental principles to seem unnecessary; but now that change is upon us we must ask the big and difficult questions that have been neglected. There is no law of nature which prevents Englishmen from doing this. We shall, however, find it hard work, and the general reader, for whom these books are intended, must not expect to be let off lightly. This sustained effort of thought, in which it is hoped individuals and groups in every rank of society will co-operate, is likely to unmask truths which we should prefer to ignore and duties which we should prefer not to have to undertake.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRISTENDOM

BY

J. H. OLDHAM

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PREFACE

THE greater part of this book was completed in draft before the war. It was intended to be submitted to the recently established Council on the Christian Faith and the Common Life (about which more will be said in the text) and, if approved by them, issued in a revised and amended form as a statement of the aims and policy of the Council. The outbreak of war prevented the carrying out of this plan, and other tasks, including the launching of the *Christian News-Letter*, had to have precedence. It has been urged by some of those who have seen the draft that it should be included in the series of C.N.L. books; and since many practical and urgent matters in war-time claim the time of the Council and preclude the deliberate consideration of a statement to be issued on its behalf, it seemed best that it should appear as a contribution for which I alone am responsible. Since the general plan for the present series required a rather longer essay than the original draft, I have added a certain amount of fresh material. A small part of the contents, more particularly

part of Chapter VII, has already appeared in the *Christian News-Letter*.

The draft of the book was substantially complete before the publication of T. S. Eliot's *The Idea of a Christian Society* (Faber & Faber). I have introduced one or two references to Mr Eliot's ideas, but to think the whole matter out afresh and to recast what I have written in the light of his stimulating treatment of the subject would have required greater labour than is possible in present circumstances. I shall feel that this book has served a good purpose if it directs the attention of some readers to Mr Eliot's profounder study.

J. H. OLDHAM.

Christmas, 1939.

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CHAPTER I

THE ISSUE

My purpose in writing this book can best be explained by quoting a letter which I wrote more than a year ago to *The Times*, and which I reproduce here by permission of the Editor. The letter was as follows:

3rd October, 1938.

“SIR,

“The lessons which are being drawn from the unforgettable experiences through which we have lived during the past few days do not for the most part seem to me to go deep enough. The period of grace that has been given us may be no more than a postponement of the day of reckoning unless we make up our minds to seek a radical cure. Our civilization can recover only if we are determined to root out the cancerous growths which have brought it to the verge of complete collapse. Whether truth and justice or caprice and violence are to prevail in human affairs is a question on which the fate of mankind depends. But to equate the conflict between these opposing forces with the contrast between democracies and dictator-

ships, real and profound as is this difference, is a dangerous simplification of the problem. To focus our attention on evil in others is a way of escape from the painful struggle of eradicating it from our own hearts and lives and an evasion of our real responsibilities.

“The basal truth is that the spiritual foundations of western civilization have been undermined. The systems which are in the ascendant on the continent may be regarded from one point of view as convulsive attempts to arrest the process of disintegration. What clear alternative have we in this country? The mind of England is confused and uncertain. Is it possible that a simple question, an affirmative answer to which is for many a matter of course and for many others an idle dream or sheer lunacy, might in these circumstances become a live and serious issue? May our salvation lie in an attempt to recover our Christian heritage, not in the sense of going back to the past but of discovering in the central affirmations and insights of the Christian faith new spiritual energies to regenerate and vitalize our sick society? Does not the public repudiation of the whole Christian scheme of life in a large part of what was once known as Christendom force to the front the question whether the path of wisdom is not rather to attempt to work out a Christian doctrine of

modern society and to order our national life in accordance with it?

“Those who would give a quick, easy or confident answer to this question have failed to understand it. It cannot even be seriously considered without a profound awareness of the extent to which Christian ideas have lost their hold over, or faded from the consciousness of, large sections of the population; of the far-reaching changes that would be called for in the structure, institutions and activities of existing society, which is in many of its features a complete denial of the Christian understanding of the meaning and end of man's existence; and of the stupendous and costly spiritual, moral and intellectual effort that any genuine attempt to order the national life in accordance with the Christian understanding of life would demand. Realistically viewed the task is so far beyond the present capacity of our British Christianity that I write as a fool. But if the will were there, I believe that the first steps to be taken are fairly clear. The presupposition of all else, however, is the recognition that nothing short of a really heroic effort will avail to save mankind from its present evils and the destruction which must follow in their train.”

It is incumbent on anyone who raises such an issue to make plain what he intends. What I

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aim at in this volume is an initial definition of some of the convictions which must inspire and maintain the proposed enterprise. As the debate proceeds thought will be further clarified.

While I am expressing my own individual convictions, my thought has been shaped by contacts over many years with those who represent very different backgrounds of tradition and experience. I have tried to discover how much there is of common ground, and I hope that what is said in this volume represents a body of convictions shared in a greater or less degree by a rather diverse company of people. For this reason the individual reader must not expect to find in it the whole truth in which he believes or the truth stated as he himself would state it. It is enough if he finds sufficient of what he believes to be the truth to enable him to co-operate in an enterprise which, if it is to succeed, demands all the available resources of Christian loyalty, incipient as well as mature.

What is New in the Undertaking

It may be asked in what sense the issue raised is new and wherein what is now proposed differs from what Christians are doing at present. What is it that is new? The answer is fourfold.

(a) *The Challenge of Events*

Events have given to the question of the end to which the life of society is directed a new seriousness and a new insistence. That statement was true before the war came, and the war has underlined it. It is a fact of vast historical significance that in what was once known as Christendom the Christian tradition should be deliberately and publicly repudiated. It is one thing to disregard in practice, as all nations have done, the standards of Christianity; it is another thing, and far more serious, openly to cast those standards aside. To commit crimes under the pressure of seeming necessity is bad, but to enunciate the doctrine that in the interest of a class or nation all considerations of truth and justice may be ignored is the spiritual death of man. In face of the new paganisms, which propose to break completely with the Christian past and to establish society on new foundations, those who believe that the welfare of mankind is bound up with the Christian understanding of life must affirm that faith in the public sphere and seek to embody its values in public policy. To be shown by the march of events the real nature of our situation is to be called to an effort on a wholly new scale.

(b) *The Growth of a Common Christian Mind*

During the past five years there has taken place in connexion with the conferences of representatives of the Churches from all parts of the world, held at Oxford and Edinburgh in 1937, an active interchange of thought in which hundreds of Christian thinkers have participated. Valuable contributions to thought have also been made by individuals and by groups. By these means the Christian understanding of contemporary issues has been enlarged and deepened, and some of the differences which have ranged Christians in opposed camps are being resolved in a more comprehensive view. New foundations have thus been laid for common action.

(c) *The Creation of a New Instrument*

By setting up in the year 1938 the Council on the Christian Faith and the Common Life, the Churches have equipped themselves with a new organ in order to address themselves to tasks which cannot be undertaken without such provision. The acid test of our belief in an undertaking is the provision of the means to make it possible. There is all the difference in the world between eloquent talk about the advantages of broadcasting and the establishment of Broadcasting House to achieve those advantages. It is proposed that we should no longer be content to

aspire after a more Christian order of society or affirm in resolutions what ought to be done, but should create an instrument and provide the resources which will make possible a concerted effort on a new scale. If that intention can be realized a new event will have taken place in the history of the Church.

(d) *The True Answer a Decision*

In the last resort the answer to the question whether the proposal represents something new is to be found not in the sphere of abstract discussion, but in that of decision. The effective answer is not the cool judgment of a spectator, but the courageous choice of a combatant. If we remain imprisoned in the circle of our present ideas and insist on measuring the possibilities of the future by our limited and narrow experience of the past, there will be no revolution. But if, in response to God's call, we make in our generation that venture of faith which in some form has been the inspiration of every advance of mankind, we shall find that the possibilities of renascence are as infinite as God's grace and power.

The Meaning of the Challenge

If we are serious in speaking of a resurrection of Christendom, we can only mean something which, if it were to come to pass, the historian

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of the future would regard as having comparable historical significance with the new social doctrines and systems which have emerged in our time. The forces that can bring about such a result are not at present in sight. Only a superficial understanding of the task could allow us to suppose that it is within the reach of our present moral and spiritual resources.

The Capacity to Affirm Both of Two Truths

Whether there takes place a Christian revival on a scale of historical importance depends on whether the Christian vision is large enough to hold in unity two truths which belong to the life of man. The one is that the true home of man's spirit is not in this world, and the other that it is in the here and now, in the dust and heat of the conflicts of this world, that he is called to fulfil his responsibility as a son of God. Is there a body of Christians whose grasp is big enough to embrace in thought and action both of these convictions—not in an uncertain and halting compromise between them, but in the costly tension of a life in which each truth is affirmed to its furthest limit? One has but to think of the passion with which men to-day surrender themselves to half-truths to realize how great a force would enter into history if there should arise a body of people free from attachment to earthly

goods and yet bound indissolubly to the service of their fellows, whose hearts were centred on a reality beyond time and space, and who, for that reason, took the more active and valiant part in the temporal struggles of mankind.

CHAPTER II

CHRISTIANITY

A Challenge to our Prepossessions

THE first obstacle to be overcome in working for a restoration of Christendom is to rid our minds of vagueness about the nature of Christianity. The temptation to accommodate its truth to the ideas already in our minds must be resisted. Its secret and power lie in its demand for a complete conversion of the mind. It does not undertake to fulfil our natural desires, but to transform them. The questions we insist on asking may be wrong questions. The mind that asks them may need to be changed. We have to lay aside our pride and confidence and become as little children to enter into the Kingdom of God.

Christianity a Gospel

The majority of men to-day have lost all understanding of the fact that Christianity is essentially a Gospel. They think of it chiefly as an ethic. But Christianity does not confront men in the first instance with a demand; it is the announcement of something that God has done.

The core of the ministry and message of Jesus was the proclamation of a new order of life inaugurated by the act of God in human history. Though its full realization lay in the future, the powers of the new age were already operative. They were manifest in the works which Christ performed and in the visible overcoming of the forces of evil. These were the signs of the in-breaking of a new order into the present world. The New Testament is inspired by the conviction that the period of fulfilment has already come. Christianity is the faith that in Jesus Christ a new force entered into history—a force that is at war with evil and has power to overcome it. That force is not exhausted; we have yet to witness the full manifestation of its power.

The primary task of the Church is thus not to proclaim ideals or tell men what they ought to do, but to be the bearer of the good news of what already is. Its immediate concern is not with the improvement of the old order, but with bringing men into a new order. It invites them to live in the divine order of forgiveness and love, of peace and joy. The Church has accommodated itself so greatly to the existing order of things that the vital difference between the old and the new has become blurred. The recovery of the distinction in both thought and experience is essential to an understanding of the meaning of Christianity.

A living faith is not something that we can achieve by our own wills. It can be born in us only by the apprehension of a reality other than ourselves. Power that can change the world must have a foundation more solid than our own aspirations and purposes. A creative faith must rest on something that exists independently of our choice and that we have not power to alter. Christianity claims to provide such a revelation of the true nature of reality. It asserts that in the facts of the Gospel story we have the clue to the understanding of man's existence. Human history has a fixed centre from which its meaning is derived.

The Christian Understanding of Man

Christianity presupposes a view of man which has the most far-reaching consequences in the social and political spheres. In its view man has his essential being in his relation to God. It is in virtue of this relation that he possesses as a person freedom and responsibility, and has a citadel of personal life which society may not invade. It is not the individual as such, but the individual in his capacity and responsibility, actual or potential, to worship and obey God, who has a status over against the community. It is only on religious grounds that the rights of the human person can be effectively maintained against the encroachments of the community and the State.

The Salvation of the Person

The more seriously we occupy ourselves with the problems of society, the plainer it becomes that man's fundamental need is the need of salvation. The majority of men are harassed by anxiety and secret fear and oppressed with a sense of frustration and of the aimlessness of life. Before they can effectively serve their fellows or take part in creating a new order they must find an inner peace. They need to be delivered from their own egoism and conflicting desires. The Christian Gospel is directed in the first instance to the problems of personal inadequacy and suffering which enter deeply into the life of the individual and which political and social systems largely ignore. However inseparably the redemption of the person is in modern society bound up with the redemption of the institutions in which he is inextricably implicated, the need of the individual for renewal and wholeness is inescapable. The more clearly we envisage the goal of social endeavour as a community of free persons living together in mutual trust and responsibility, the more evident it becomes that the condition of such a society is that men should be liberated from themselves for the single-minded service of God and their fellow-men.

The Call to Perfection

Christianity calls us to the worship and service of a God who transcends all that is human. In the light of His demands even the best that we think or purpose is revealed as hollow and second-rate. The unconditional claim of Christianity reaches far beyond the imperfect and fitful refractions of Christian truth that find embodiment in an unregenerate society. Much disservice has been done to the Christian cause by an optimistic idealism, which claims the Christian name, but is quite alien in spirit to the realistic Christian understanding of the heights and depths of life—of the perfection towards which man is called to strive and of the deadly forces which threaten to destroy his soul.

In the Christian concern with personal sanctity, of which the world has to-day too few examples, lies the chief hope of a regenerated society. It is from adventurous individuals, who are not content with conventional standards, and who live beyond the claims and counter-claims of ordinary morality, that there are infused into the common life new moral energies which renew and vitalize it.

The Universalism of Christianity

Christianity is anchored to a Gospel which, if it is a Gospel at all, is a Gospel for all men. The

Christian Church is in its essential nature universal. Loyalty to the universal Church is prior to loyalty to a national Church. If what is said in the following pages relates in the main to our own country, it is because the immediate and direct responsibilities of those to whom the statement is addressed lie in that field, and also because it is still our good fortune to enjoy liberties of action which are denied elsewhere. But all thought and action in the national sphere must be inspired and controlled by consciousness of two facts. The first is that the chief hindrance to social good is the menace of war and that only in a just and peaceful international order can a healthy national society be brought into being. The second is that few greater services could be rendered by Christians to our own country and to mankind than by bringing to human affairs the enlargement of understanding and widening of sympathies which are born of conscious membership in a universal society.

The Cross

If the claim of Christianity to be the revelation of the true nature of reality is valid, the significance of the Cross is decisive and inexhaustible. Its crucial importance for the project of a new Christendom is the searching light in which it sets the problem of power. To

live is to have power; vigour of life is enhancement of power. Society exists in virtue of its power; the exercise of power is necessary to its cohesion. But power in society corrupts, and its unrestrained pursuit can end only in destruction. The Cross is the divine answer to men's love of power.

As members of society Christians must participate in the exercise of power. But an understanding of the meaning of the Cross will lead them in every relation of life to renounce absolute claims. With every tendency to self-assertion will come the antidote of the knowledge that life is fulfilled far less in the expansion and aggrandizement of the self than in patience and endurance, in the readiness to suffer, and in the experience of community, of which the essential bond is the acknowledgment that the point of view of others deserves no less consideration than our own. For those who have grasped the meaning of the Cross, it is impossible to deify any human institution or system. Not even in the attempt to create a Christian society or to formulate a Christian philosophy may the spirit of self-questioning and humility be lacking, lest under the cloak of service to God there may lurk an all too human love of power.

Resurrection

Christianity has also its Gospel of resurrection. This is not only the assurance that fellowship with God is in its nature deathless and that Christ has conquered death, but a confident trust in the power of God to renew the life of the world. If we may dare to believe that God is Light and Love, we have every ground for expecting that when the powers of darkness and nihilism are at work with demonic energy, the divine creative activity can call into existence on a commensurate scale the forces of sanity, truth and goodness. Faith in the operation of these mighty forces, transcending our infirm wills and fitful purposes, begets courage and hope to wage war on the powers of evil, however deeply they may have entrenched themselves in the present life of society.

CHAPTER III

MODERN SOCIETY

It is idle to speak of a new Christendom without an understanding of the nature of modern society. We have as yet little imaginative grasp of the problems which it presents to Christian change. The force of habit inclines us still to think and feel in terms of a vanished age.

Increase of Central Control

The main features of modern society are not in dispute. Technical advances have brought about large-scale organization of production and marketing. The activities of society are in consequence increasingly subject to centralized regulation and control.

This is true not only of industrial and commercial activities, but of the whole of social and cultural life. What people shall be taught, to what they shall listen, how they shall think, how they shall use their leisure, are questions that are more and more determined by some central authority representing the community as a whole or by a relatively small number of persons who control the various agencies of information and education.

The present century has witnessed the growth of powerful new techniques for the formation of opinion and feeling. Those who direct these techniques have unprecedented opportunities of moulding the ideas and attitudes of the mass of the population.

Whether we like it or not, social life is being increasingly planned both as a whole and in its various parts. Where there is a plan, the individual has either to conform or to refuse his co-operation and suffer the consequences.

The Dominance of Impersonal Forces

Most of the decisions which the majority of men to-day have to make in their daily work, or to which they have to submit, are collective decisions. The share of any individual in arriving at these collective decisions is often insignificant and difficult to determine. To those who have to bow to them, they are apt to have the appearance of fate.

Yet these decisions are the product of human minds and wills. At a time when the increase of knowledge has in large measure emancipated mankind from subjection to the harsh necessities of a natural environment, men find themselves increasingly subdued to the pervasive control of an environment fashioned by man himself.

The life of groups and of society as a whole

seems to have acquired a momentum of its own. The tragic truth of this is brought home to the dullest mind by the fact that, contrary to the desires of the overwhelming majority of men in all countries, we are engaged to-day in the satanic enterprise of mutual slaughter.

Society—Christian or Pagan?

These facts are sufficiently familiar. But our mental attitude towards them has not yet undergone a revolution corresponding to that which has taken place in the external world.

Men's characters are formed by the acts which they perform and the behaviour in which they participate. Beliefs lose their reality when they cease to be translated into action. When the daily activities in which men engage are directed to ends irreconcilable with the Christian faith, or necessitate behaviour incompatible with it, that faith must seem increasingly unreal and unrelated to life. The surrender to its common purposes which is demanded by the modern community can be made by the Christian without self-degradation and without an intolerable division of the self only to a society that is in process of being transformed by the Christian values.

The enhanced power of man to control his natural environment and, increasingly, human

nature itself, opens up unprecedented opportunities of achieving a richer personal and social life. The reach of human activities has been immeasurably extended. But the new powers demand for their exercise a corresponding growth in imagination, sympathy and self-mastery. There is required of man a stupendous moral effort to subdue the forces he has brought into existence to a spiritual purpose. Unless the increasing control of social activities by the community is consciously directed to the enlargement of freedom and responsibility, man will be deprived of what above all else makes him man. He can survive as a person only in a society animated by the conviction that he has ends and loyalties that reach beyond society and are rooted in the eternal world.

It is thus an issue of vital importance for mankind whether the aims of society are directed by pagan conceptions of life, or are in accord with the Christian view that men have been created in the image of God and are called to live in the world as His free and responsible sons. A deliberate attempt is being made in part of Europe to build society on pagan or purely secular foundations. We are witnessing the emergence of a consciously post-Christian world. In our own country the die has not yet been cast. Great Britain has certainly not deliberately abandoned the Christian element in its tradition.

But neither are we clear what that element signifies for contemporary life, nor is there any passionate resolve to make it the determining principle of national policy. The unstable equilibrium cannot be indefinitely maintained. We can avoid the progressive paganization of thought and life only by a conscious and determined effort to recover the Christian scale of values and make it the touchstone of public policy.

The Need for a Social and Political Faith

The vital need of our own society is for a social and political faith in which men whole-heartedly believe. A political faith expressing itself in a definite social philosophy is not the same thing as the political programme of a parliamentary party. What is meant is a body of assumptions, purposes and ways of behaviour which are shared by the great majority of the people and are the common foundation of different party programmes and varying intellectual formulations.

We have witnessed in our time the power of new social faiths to change the face of society. Whatever truth these new faiths may contain, they are in vital respects a denial of the Christian understanding of life. Their challenge has at the same time revealed the weaknesses of plutocracy, and few serious minds find a convinc-

ing alternative in the present life of Western democracies. The mind of Great Britain instinctively rejects the new doctrines which are in the ascendant elsewhere, but is far from sure what to put in their place.

False doctrines of society can be overcome only by a faith and philosophy that do greater justice to the true nature of man and to the realities of contemporary life. No intellectual doctrine is sufficient in itself to change society. Ideas, to be effective, must be incarnated in persons and embodied in institutions. It is by what they love or hate that men are moved to creative effort. But their power to act decisively is inhibited when they are without a clue by which they can interpret their experience. They must find meaning in their activities if they are to escape from the sense of frustration.

A living political faith to which men are willing to consecrate their lives and for which they are prepared to die is the only protection of society against the dangers which threaten its higher life. The birth and growing ascendancy of such a faith and doctrine is the indispensable foundation of a society in which Christians can be content to live.

In What Sense Christian ?

I have refrained from describing the political faith which is a vital necessity for the regeneration

of society as specifically Christian. It can satisfy Christians only in the degree that it accords with the Christian understanding of the nature, end and obligation of man. But there are three grounds for hesitation in regarding as intrinsically Christian a philosophy that has to do with the purposes of a mixed society—*i.e.*, a society which includes many who reject or are wholly indifferent to the Christian faith, as well as many Christians who imperfectly apprehend it.

In the first place, a political faith and philosophy, in order to be operative in a society in which professing Christians are a minority, must gain assent on grounds which appeal to the natural reason. The ultimate justification and sanction of the principles embodied in such a philosophy can for Christians only be the truth which they have seen in Christ. But in the political sphere the principles must be advocated and defended on rational, and not on specifically Christian, grounds.

Secondly, the teaching of Christ has to do with the principles of life in a new, redeemed order. It does not profess to tell men how to solve their difficulties while their purposes remain unchanged. There are many situations in which there is no Christian solution because the aims that are being pursued are fundamentally wrong. The principles of the Kingdom of God cannot be translated into axioms for the guidance of a

worldly-minded society without being transformed into something different. In this distorted form the guidance which they appear to give may be fallacious and lead in the political sphere to disastrous consequences.

Thirdly, it is essential to keep clear the distinction between the sphere of religion where obedience must be unconditional and the sphere of politics where all choices are relative. The application of the term Christian without qualification to a social or political philosophy is apt to blur the vital difference between the Kingdom of God and the present temporal, sinful order, and to encourage the identification of Christianity with the highest standards of political morality in forgetfulness of its deeper meanings.

It seems better, therefore, to refrain from the outright use of the term Christian, and to say rather that what is urgently needed is a social and political faith and philosophy which is compatible with the Christian understanding of the end of man, is leavened with Christian values, and owes some of its major insights to Christian minds which have co-operated in its formulation.

Christian Responsibility for Public Life

To work for a restored Christendom means that Christians must take an initiative and active part in the generation of such a political faith and

philosophy. To evade this responsibility is to incur the risk that the whole institutional life of society may come under the sway of the demonic forces of evil. To believe in the Christian revelation, moreover, is to be persuaded that it embodies the truth of man's existence, and that only through recovery of this truth and obedience to it can the world find its way back to sanity, peace and social justice. The Christian understanding of man is a protection against the errors which too often vitiate other systems at the root. The Christian knows that man is not the architect of his own destiny, that he is not God, and may not aspire to be God; that he is bound by the necessities of a created world, and has yet been given a measure of freedom in order that he may serve God and live in the world as God's son.

CHAPTER IV

CHRISTIAN QUESTIONS RELATING TO SOCIETY

It is necessary for our task to know not only what society is in fact, but also what it is in the divine intention. What is the truth of man in society to which God is leading men through their historical strivings and conflicts, through their sins and resulting frustrations? Are there certain recognizable features which characterize a society that is seeking to realize its true ends? Are there Christian canons of judgment by which social and political systems and policies may be judged—or at any rate certain specific questions which an enlightened Christian mind will be disposed to ask about them?

In considering the tentative suggestions here offered for discussion, four things have to be borne in mind.

The first is that the application of these canons to any concrete situation is never plain and clear-cut. A social situation has a multiplicity of aspects, none of which can be safely ignored. Two principles, each valid in itself, may at times be in conflict, so that in the circumstances effect can be given to the one only through some sacrifice of the other. Behind the bewildering

complexity of facts, moreover, there are hidden powers at work in human history which elude the finite understanding. Neither an easy optimism nor a self-confident dogmatism is the characteristic Christian attitude, but a humble reverence before the mysteries of life.

Secondly, any formulation of canons of judgment is bound to appear abstract. Their real meaning can be discovered only through the endeavour to apply them. Sincere acceptance of the canons which follow would have a revolutionary effect on any society which at present exists. But this will come about only when some people begin to change things in accordance with the truths in which they believe.

Thirdly, when it comes to application, we may expect to find wide and sharp differences even among those who are in agreement about the ends. In the tangled web of social activities and institutions the attempt to achieve some good in a particular way may seem to others equally sincere likely to cause as great evils as it removes.

Nevertheless, in the fourth place, we may not disguise from ourselves that between many of the aims which are being pursued in society to-day and the aims to which Christians are committed there is a mortal quarrel. It is our task to tear from the hearts of both ourselves and others the veils of self-deception which permit men to offer plausible reasons for the defence of

their own interests, or for the lethargy and cowardice which shrink from doing battle with evil.

1. *The Freedom and Responsibility of Persons*

In the Christian view the end of all social activities and institutions is to contribute to the growth of free and responsible persons, realizing their vocation as sons of God and living in relations of mutual trust, obligation and service.

The dominant purpose of society being to assist human persons to achieve the spiritual ends of their existence and to realize the potentialities of their emotional, intellectual and moral nature, the provision of goods and services and commercial and financial policies must be subordinated to this end. To achieve this involves an almost complete reversal of the prevailing order of values.

2. *Tolerance*

The Christian understanding of man as a created, finite being with limited powers is opposed to every attempt to give an absolute value to any one element in the temporal order—to a particular class or nation, to a particular philosophy or system, to a particular aspect of human nature, rational or vital, or to a particular interest, economic or cultural. In a society

imbued with the Christian temper, men, remembering their finitude, will be reluctant to push things to the extreme. This attitude, grounded in religious faith, is at the opposite pole from an anæmic indifferentism to which every opinion is as good as another. It has its roots in religious humility, a knowledge of one's own finitude and a respect for the individuality of others.

3. *Social Justice*

Reference to a conception so comprehensive in meaning as justice cannot be more than the erection of a signpost. The burden of both the Old and the New Testaments is that God is a righteous God. The struggle for equal justice has underlain all the advances in human history, and only a society which is striving after new embodiments of justice demanded by the changing conditions of each age can aspire to the name of a new Christendom.

4. *A Pluralist Society*

The term is used not to affirm a particular political theory, but to express the truth that a society which has as its objective the growth of free and responsible persons will aim at a wide diffusion of responsibility and be vigilant in imposing checks on excessive concentrations of

power. It will find room for a multiplicity of groups pursuing their own social, cultural, professional and economic ends, and enjoying the largest possible autonomy in these spheres subject to the common control of the law. It will foster regional and local independent efforts, respect the rights of minorities and aim at creating as many centres as possible in which men may train themselves as citizens through the exercise of initiative and responsibility. In modern society central planning is a necessity, but it depends on our conception of the ends of life whether the planning leads to increased regimentation and uniformity or is consciously directed to the enlargement of opportunities for free and responsible choice by groups and by individuals.

5. *Reverence for Nature*

The Christian understanding of the world as God's creation must beget a religious respect for Nature. Men will regard the materials on which their labour is expended not merely as means of gratifying their desires, but as possessing qualities to be understood, appreciated and loved. They will distinguish clearly between the use and the reckless exploitation of natural resources. The Christian mind will have an instinctive sympathy with efforts to re-establish a harmony between man and Nature and to resist

the destruction and wastage of the resources of the earth.

6. *The Family*

A society subservient to Christian ends will safeguard the rights of the family as a separate unit in the community, possessing rights anterior to those of the State. In the home persons are valued for what they are in themselves rather than for what they do. Work and business engage only a part of the personality, but in the love of the family the whole man can find his satisfaction. The family is a school of character, providing an education in sympathy and understanding, in self-control and co-operation. It is a training-ground in responsibility and mutual obligation, and builds the dispositions which fit its members to participate in the wider life of the community.

7. *The Universal Church*

A society oriented towards Christianity will recognize that the chief end of man is spiritual. It will accord to the Church freedom to declare its message and to minister to the souls of men. In virtue of its faith that man has his essential being in relation to a God who transcends the temporal order, the Church is also the guardian of the truth that man as person has goals which

reach beyond society, such as the disinterested pursuit of knowledge, skill and goodness. A Church conscious of its true nature and function is both the strongest bulwark against the absolutist claims of the State or the community and the guarantor of those spontaneous expressions of the human spirit which are incapable of organization and regimentation and which make possible the growth of a society beyond itself.

The Christian Church, moreover, as a universal society transcends the bounds of nationality, and is in unalterable opposition to the deification of a human community. It bears perpetual witness to the unity of mankind as the object of God's creative and redeeming love.

The examination of the theological foundations of these principles, their further elucidation and supplementation, and the working out of their implications for all aspects of the life of society is a task to which Christians must address themselves with their whole energies, if they are in earnest about the restoration of Christendom.

CHAPTER V

THE DUAL PERSPECTIVE

THE aim of a new Christendom can be pursued effectively only if it is clearly seen that Christians have a dual task. Much confusion and consequent inhibition are caused by failure to recognize this duality.

Two Aspects of the Life of the Church

In ordinary thought about the Church, its life is conceived as having a single focus. Attention is concentrated on the Church as a society organized for specifically religious purposes. As such it has its special function in society, distinct from other ranges, interests and activities of human life. But viewed from another angle the Church is the community of those who are committed to a new life and are seeking to serve God in every activity in which they engage. In this aspect the Church is co-extensive with the life of the community, in so far as that life is redeemed to God's purposes. The Church thus has its existence both in separation from the other spheres of human activity and also within those spheres. The Christian mind must

accustom itself to thinking of the Church as having these two distinct foci. This implies a shift of interest from too exclusive an occupation with ecclesiastical matters and religious observances to the concerns and struggles of ordinary men. So far from weakening religion, this change will bring it enhanced vigour by reuniting it with the activities of the common life.

Two Distinct Questions

The fact that the approach to problems of social and political life is generally from the standpoint of the Church as a society organized for distinctively religious purposes, and of those whose specific concern and business are with religion in the narrower sense, is apt to lead to a wrong initial formulation of the issues. Two separate questions are not distinguished with sufficient clarity. Those who serve God in the common life have in their daily work to find answers not to one, but to two distinct questions. They have, in the first instance, to settle their account with the claims of Christian discipleship, and these demand as uncompromising an obedience from those who would serve God in the common life as from those who are called to the sacred ministry. But when this question of personal responsibility has been decided, there remains the further question of the right

policy and practice for the industry, business or profession in which the individual is engaged. This question is not one of individual conduct, but of the right working of institutions.

The Problem of Institutions

Institutions acquire a tradition and impetus of their own. They accumulate recognized principles of action, and come to embody a temper and spirit which impose themselves on all who serve them. Forms of conduct become habitual and operate to a large extent independently of the choice of individuals. These habits of action have grown up as the result of a multitude of individual decisions, but, having taken shape, they can be altered only by a slow and gradual process.

The decisions which have to be taken, moreover, in the institutional sphere are collective decisions. The influence which the individual can exert in shaping them is often insignificant, and if he is in a subordinate position, he may not be able to influence them at all.

Institutions, no less than individuals, are infected with evil. Their activities may be directed to false and unworthy ends. Those who serve in them may consequently find themselves in situations in which the highest good from the Christian standpoint is not within

reach, and the only choice is of what from this point of view is the lesser evil. This does not mean that the Christian is ever absolved from discovering what in any situation is the absolutely right thing to do and from doing it at whatever cost to himself. It means that, since the working of an institution is in a very limited degree in his individual control, the action that is possible in given circumstances may often fall far short of what is objectively good.

The Nature of Office

The function which a man fulfils in society in the service of one of its institutions may be described as his office. What is required of a Christian in the exercise of his office is not necessarily the same thing as what he is called to do in his direct relations as a person with other persons. A man who exercises a function in society cannot leave out of account the expectations of those who entrusted him with the office. If he desires to act in a way contrary to those expectations, he must vacate his office or expect to be relieved of it.

There are occasions when the Christian's duty is to take this course. There may be functions in society which Christians cannot undertake. Demands may be made in the exercise of an otherwise legitimate function which they are

bound to refuse. It may be that if Christians were sufficiently in earnest about their beliefs, such protests would be made on a far larger scale than at present. A policy of non-cooperation may be the only effective means of opening the eyes of men to what is wrong in society.

But a general withdrawal of Christians from participation in social activities would be the abandonment of the common life and the civic sphere to the control of other forces. For the great majority of Christians the path of duty will lie in the continued discharge of their functions, while refusing to acquiesce in the prevailing standards and practices. Fearless public witness to what their faith requires would enable Christians in many instances to exert an influence on public policy out of all proportion to their numbers. Dynamic effects may be produced by the courageous action of a single individual.

Need for an Ethic of Corporate Action

A serious attempt to deal with the ethical problems of institutional life demands new measures appropriate to the end in view. If nothing can be offered to those engaged in corporate activities except an ethic of individual conduct, they are left without guidance in most of the decisions which they have to make in their

daily work. To tell men that they must act in accordance with the absolute law of love affords them no help in the practical choices which they have to make in the enterprises in which they are engaged. What they need is some standard by which to judge in what way the practical alternatives between which they have to choose in industry, administration or politics are contributory or contrary to social good as the Christian understands it in the light of his faith.

Christian ethical teaching has been concerned in the main with the relation of the individual person to other persons. There is little guidance to be had how Christians should act in the exercise of the various functions in modern social life. Since the larger part of the acts which the majority of men perform to-day are acts connected with the discharge of their office, the lack of such guidance makes the Christian ethic appear unreal.

A Lay Undertaking

The transformation of social enterprises and institutions concerns the Church in both aspects of its life. But in the main it is the responsibility of those who conduct the affairs of the common life and are able by their daily decisions and acts to bring its activities into increasing conformity with the purpose of God. The task is essentially a lay undertaking, depending on lay initiative

and enterprise. The growth of a new Christendom presupposes the awakening on a large scale of a new and compelling sense of responsibility among the Christian laity.

Christians who seek to fulfil the will of God in the affairs of the common life will be guided in their decisions and acts by their central Christian loyalty. They will decide and act as members of the Church, obedient to its faith and teaching, strengthened by its fellowship and fortified by its worship and sacraments. But since decisions in social and political matters depend on judgments of facts and consequences about which Christians may legitimately differ, those who make these decisions will not attempt, in making them, to commit the Church as such, but will act individually or in groups, on their own judgment and at their own risk. They will not demand that the Church as a whole should act with them or endorse their decisions.

A Christian Lay "Order"

The enterprise of a new Christendom can hardly become a serious undertaking without the coming into existence of something which can perhaps best be described as an "order" of Christian laymen. The term is not intended to suggest a society with a registered membership or the taking of vows, but rather to convey the idea

of conscious dedication to a cause. Those who belonged to the order would be committed to the service of the new Christendom and to the other members of some group with which they were associated.

A movement looking to a new Christendom must have the guidance of men and women of high-class ability and wide experience occupying positions of influence in the public life. These would form an *élite* in the sense that they would accept the obligations of an acknowledged vocation and bring to the movement their exceptional gifts of knowledge and experience. What we envisage is not a single association, but rather a multiplicity of groups. The problems of political life, public administration, local government, the social services, industry, labour, commerce, the Press, the universities, secondary education and elementary education are so varied as to demand the attention of separate groups. Moreover, where social and political policies are involved, opinions regarding what is desirable and practicable may be expected to differ, and room must be found for a variety of groups animated by a common spirit, but advocating different courses of action.

The possible forms of association are many. They will include both the association of Christians as such and the participation of Christians in wider groups with the social and

political aims of which they are in sympathy. What methods of collaboration will prove most advantageous cannot be determined in advance. But if the idea of a new Christendom strikes root, it will undoubtedly evoke a new leadership and new forms of co-operation.

Local Initiative and Effort

We have made a distinction between a central, national leadership and the more general effort in which every Christian and group of Christians, according to their capacity and in their own spheres, make their necessary contribution to the common task. But obviously between the two there is no hard-and-fast dividing line.

If a new sense of Christian responsibility for the public good were awakened, we might expect to find throughout the country persons banding themselves together for the better service of God in the sphere of citizenship. These groups might be composed of those belonging to the same profession or pursuing similar occupations, meeting to consider how their particular calling could best contribute to the growth of a new Christendom; or they might be local groups concerning themselves from the Christian standpoint with such problems as those of health, housing, education, leisure, poverty and unemployment in a particular locality. Such groups are already

in existence, but need to be greatly multiplied. Here also opportunities will be found both for the association of Christians as such and for their co-operation in more general efforts. A widespread variety of experiment along such lines would be in accord with British tradition. It is the essential spirit of democracy that people do not wait to be told what to do, but spontaneously get to work on the tasks that lie nearest at hand. An outburst of local initiative and effort would communicate to the social organism a new vitality, invigorating all its parts, and would be the means of educating in character and capacity the type of citizen required by the new order.

The Relation of the Church to the Enterprise

To a movement in the social and political fields, depending in the main on lay initiative and responsibility, the Church as an organized society has its own indispensable and vital contribution to make. The inspiration and sustenance of the movement must come from the faith regarding God and man to which the Church by its existence and ministries bears witness. Those who are active in the movement must have a growing understanding of the meaning of the Gospel, and their mind needs to be renewed and their spirit restored through worship. Individuals require to be sustained by the faith

and ethical passion of the whole Christian fellowship. The Church must stand increasingly in the eye of the community for certain clear convictions regarding the purposes of life and the right relations of men with one another. As the outlines of the new morality of corporate action become plain, its obligations must be impressed on the mind and conscience of the members of the Church by its teachers.

Those of the clergy who are equipped with the necessary knowledge and experience would naturally participate in the central leadership of which we have spoken. The rank and file of the clergy have opportunities of stimulating and fostering the local lay activities which have been suggested, of relating them to Christian worship and of making fresh connexions between the Christian faith and the common life. Adequately to meet the new demands may call for special training and readjustment of the present activities of the parish or congregation. What needs to be kept clearly in view is that whereas in the Church as a society organized for specifically religious purposes the normal, though not exclusive, leadership belongs to the clergy, in the Church as it finds expression in the spheres of the common life the normal, though not exclusive, leadership rests with the laity.

The Cost of the New Effort

If it is God's purpose out of the strife and sufferings of our time to bring to birth a society in which the true ends of man's life are more fully achieved, the human response to that purpose must be that of Christian heroism. A vitally Christian renewal will be the work of sainthood. The only way in which a new social order can be born is that multitudes of individual men and women should find a new specific vocation in the dedication of themselves to the service of God in the sphere of citizenship. If there is to be a new Christendom, the Christian cause must have its storm-troops—its adventurers of the spirit, pioneers and martyrs. A community of free and responsible persons makes larger demands than any other on the character and loyalty of its members.

CHAPTER VI

THE PROSPECT

To many the idea of the restoration of Christendom will seem wholly utopian. Nothing could be farther from my intention than to suggest that it is a goal of easy or immediate attainment.

The Paganization and Secularization of Society

I have already called attention to the significance of the fact that in a large part of what once was Christendom there has been a deliberate and public repudiation of the Christian understanding of life. All the modern techniques of propaganda have been used to eradicate it from the minds of the rising generation and to instil into them contrary principles of life. Not only where the doctrines of National Socialism and Communism prevail, but in other areas, such as South-Eastern Europe, youth has come to believe in force as the controlling principle of life. The evangelization of Europe is a gigantic task that has to be taken in hand afresh.

Our own country has certainly not openly cast off the Christian tradition. But we have not escaped the secularization of life and thought

which has infected the whole of western society. Whatever our religious professions, we have, like other peoples, succumbed in practice to the pursuit of material ends. There are social evils and injustices in our nation and empire which forbid us to call ourselves in contrast with other nations a Christian society. For large sections of our population the central affirmations of the Christian faith have ceased to have a living meaning. On many of those who are most devotedly and effectively serving their fellow-men the Christian creeds have lost their hold, since they fail to command the convinced assent of their whole moral being.

The Christian view, moreover, has to contend both with an enervating pessimism and moral defeatism and with a self-confident optimism which believes that man is capable of realizing the ends of his existence even when separated from the source of his being in God.

On the one hand, the uncertainties of the future create a psychological barrier to any attempt to enlist men in long-range, constructive tasks. Can such small endeavours as individuals or groups are able to make have any appreciable effect on the vast impersonal forces which seem to hold mankind firmly in their grip?

On the other hand, while man's trust in his unaided powers has received a shock, it is far

from being dethroned. The working faith of the majority of educated men in western countries is that what man desires he can through his science and invention in the end bring to pass. In this respect there is no difference between the outlook of Communism and Nazism and the liberal humanism which they have displaced. The forces which have brought about the present state of affairs are still powerful. A self-reliant humanism holds men by the truth that it embodies, and the falsehood it contains is not yet perceived. A temper of mind which is the growth of centuries cannot be altered in a night. Christians must reckon on having to live for a long time to come in a world animated by a spirit widely different from their own faith.

Grounds for Hope

Dark though the prospect is, the situation is not without elements of hope.

The eagerness with which men have sought salvation in totalitarian systems springs partly from a sense of individual helplessness and a desire to escape from responsibility, but partly also from a longing for justice that has been denied them and a yearning for a lost community. The minds of men are open to listen to those who will prove by their acts their faith that it is God's

will for human life that it should be founded on justice and express itself in true community.

To regard individual man as the ultimate source of values is an idolatry in which men increasingly find it impossible to put their trust, and the deification of collective man must in the end prove equally unsatisfying. The ultimate religious issue stands out more clearly, and the Christian message about God may find an unexpected response. History is educating men, and to forget that powerful forces are working on the side of Christian faith is to fall into needless discouragement.

The fierceness of the repudiation of the Christian tradition may awaken Christians to a realization of what they hold in trust for mankind. It may call into existence a body of people convinced in the depths of their being that the hope of the world lies in the recovery of the Christian heritage, not in the sense of merely going back to the past, but of re-discovering in the central Christian affirmations new sources of spiritual energy to regenerate society.

In our own country there are latent spiritual reserves on which to draw. The Christian tradition has struck deep roots in the national life. The secularization of life and thought has proceeded less far than in many countries. There is a widely diffused loyalty to Christian standards of behaviour. To be fully effective it needs to

become more clearly conscious of the true sources of its inspiration. But it is a reservoir of spiritual power.

I agree with Mr T. S. Eliot that the state of this country at the present time can best be described as neutral—it is neither positively and actively Christian, nor is it deliberately pagan; and that it cannot remain permanently in that neutral condition. It must either consciously and definitely choose to be Christian, or become avowedly pagan. If the consequences of the choice were clearly realized there is at least a chance that a majority of the more responsible members of the community, by whom such choices are in fact determined, would prefer that the society should be Christian.

The Future in God's Hands

No finite mind can fully comprehend the forces at work in history. We can see tendencies making for disharmony and disintegration. We know that regenerative influences are also at work. They enter into society as individuals respond to God's call and open their minds and hearts to the influence of His Spirit. Whether moral and spiritual decay has proceeded so far that a civilization can no longer survive, or whether new spiritual energies may penetrate its life, is known only to God. But for Christians the latter

possibility must always remain open. Faith in the Holy Spirit as an abiding presence and power in the world can keep us from despondency and faint-heartedness. If our earthly life has windows opening into a spiritual universe of Light and Love, there are unseen powers which can invade our lives and infuse new vitality into the life of mankind. More important than anything that we *do* is a receptivity of soul to such visitations from the unseen world. The activity of Jesus was directed to awakening in men the spirit of expectancy.

CHAPTER VII

THE MANIFOLD DEMANDS OF THE TASK

The Meaning of a New Christendom

LET us now try to make a little clearer what kind of society would be entitled to be described as a new Christendom and what is involved in the task of bringing such a society to birth. We certainly cannot mean a society in which all men are Christians. Christianity, with its belief in the radical nature of evil, is free from optimistic illusions about the natural goodness of man. It knows that every moral advance brings with it fresh temptations and new possibilities of evil as well as of further good. The difference between a pagan society and one which may be called in some sense Christian, is that the latter is consciously directed towards the true ends of man's existence understood in the light of the Christian revelation. It is a society leavened by Christian insights and standards. This does not mean that there may not be in practice frequent, and even grave, lapses from those standards. But when such lapses occur they are recognized as deviations from acknowledged standards, and an attempt is made to recover the ground that has been lost.

Mr T. S. Eliot's Distinctions

The distinctions made by Mr T. S. Eliot in regard to this matter are so illuminating that a brief reference must be made to them. A Christian society in the sense in which the term is here used would contain three elements.

First, there would be the Christian State. By this is meant that the public policy of the society would be directed to Christian ends and public affairs conducted in accordance with acknowledged Christian standards. It is not necessary that those who conduct these affairs should themselves be convinced Christians. But they would be required by the tradition and expectations of the community which they served to determine and carry out their policy within a Christian framework. It follows that, as Mr Eliot says, "a sceptical or indifferent statesman, working within a Christian frame, might be more effective than a devout Christian statesman obliged to conform to a secular frame."

Secondly, there would be what Mr Eliot calls the Christian community. The great majority of men, as history and experience teach us, do not think deeply about religion. They are not consciously awake to the ultimate issues of life. Their attention is engrossed by the cares, concerns and pleasures of day-to-day existence. So far as the mass are influenced by religion, it will be

mainly in the sphere of behaviour and habit, rather than of conscious response to its claims. In a Christian society the tradition by which habit is formed and the standards to which behaviour is expected to conform would be derived from the Christian understanding of the ends of life. Thus the lives of the mass of men would be touched and shaped, albeit unconsciously, by the Christian faith; while those who made a conscious response to the Gospel and by a definite decision committed themselves to Christian discipleship would not find between their Christian profession and the practices of the society in whose activities they shared a divergence so great as to impose an intolerable strain.

Thirdly, there would be, in Mr Eliot's phraseology, the community of Christians. By this is meant a body of convinced Christians, accepting the obligations of Christian allegiance, assisting one another in the spiritual and intellectual understanding of the Christian faith, creating a Christian mind and Christian conscience, permeating with the spirit of Christian faith and love the relations of men with one another, and redeeming the social life from the aridity and shallowness of secularism and from subjugation to demonic forces.

Attack on Converging Lines

If this be a sufficiently clear picture for working purposes of what is intended by a new Christendom, it is plain that, if the desired transformation is to be brought about, the problem needs to be attacked along a number of converging lines. Five tasks may be distinguished—all of them immense, all of them necessary. They are not all in equal degree the concern of the Church in its corporate capacity, but they are all alike essential to the establishment of a more Christian social order. If any one of them is neglected there will never be a society deserving of the name of a new Christendom.

1. The Religious Task

The first necessity is a re-awakening and re-invigoration of Christian faith, evoking fresh spiritual energies, both intellectual and emotional. The intellectual depth, power and richness of the Christian view of life in contrast with other ways of understanding the purpose of man's existence need to be set forth with convincing force. There will be no large-scale revolution without a body of people whose minds and hearts have been possessed by a vitalizing and liberating conviction about the nature of reality. They must know that they are not carrying on their own shoulders the burden of a superhuman

task, but are borne forward by eternal forces. There is all the difference in the world between a faith which we have to carry and a faith which carries us. There is no force strong enough to change society except the creative activity of those who have been freed from the fetters of fear and egoism to live adventurously in the service of God and their fellow-men.

2. *A Social Philosophy*

Secondly, it is essential that, as has already been urged in an earlier chapter (pp. 22-3), the national life should be guided by a widely accepted social purpose embodied in a social philosophy. The lack of a sufficiently clear and strong social purpose is our chief weakness in the war, and may be fatal to effective reconstruction when it is over. To create a better society there must be some agreement about what life is *for* and what are the values that we want to realize.

It is an absolutely vital matter for Christians whether the dominant social faith and purpose is one which acknowledges and embodies Christian standards and values, or one which negates them. In the latter case the Christian who takes part in the activities of the common life is forced to deny in his daily acts the faith by which he desires to live.

3. *Political Action*

Thirdly, we cannot get a better society without changes in its institutions. As ideas and values change, the social structure must change with them. As a matter of fact our own society is changing with unprecedented rapidity. This was true before the war, but under war conditions changes are taking place within a few days or weeks that in ordinary times might take decades to bring about. It is a vital matter to know where these changes are taking us, and to ensure that they take us where we really want to go. The only way in which desirable changes can be brought about in the structure of society and undesirable changes prevented is by political action. All talk about a better society is idle day-dreaming till it is translated into public policy. To suppose that we can meet the needs of other men to-day by individual action, except within a very restricted field, is to be blind to the nature of modern society. We can serve men only by social action, which either creates or denies opportunity. Political life to-day is the real battlefield between the forces of love and callousness, of justice and injustice. For this reason a recall to religion must necessarily mean a recall to politics.

4. Widespread Initiative

Fourthly, there must be vigorous local as well as central action. Society is not a machine that can be centrally controlled. It is composed of a multitude of living persons, each contributing his or her personal experience and effort to the total life. The transformation of society therefore, requires the activity of hundreds of thousands of individuals who are changing their immediate environment in the right direction. This spontaneous, creative initiative and exercise of responsibility by individual persons is perhaps the most important and valuable element in the democratic idea.

The principal force which can bring into existence a new Christendom is the faithful and persevering efforts of a multitude of persons who have apprehended the social significance of the family and fulfil their obligations in that sphere; who play their part in the activities of local government, in social services of varied kinds and in particular in the service of youth; and who consecrate themselves to the task of re-shaping industrial, commercial and professional life in the light of Christian standards.

5. The Contribution of Science

Fifthly, for the bringing into existence of a better order of society the aid of science is in-

dispensable. This includes both the natural and the social sciences. No amount of Christian devotion and goodwill, no social philosophy, however profound, no political action, however vigorous, will bring us to our goal if we ignore or misread the facts and forces of the world with which we have to deal. The scientific movement which has brought about the astonishing advances of recent centuries, and which had its origin, as Professor A. N. Whitehead tells us, in the medieval belief in the rationality of God, must be baptized into Christ. The task of creating a healthy social order demands the co-operation of a multitude of scientific workers. These must not be content to be historians *and* Christians, or economists *and* Christians, but, while preserving a complete scientific disinterestedness in the study of their particular field, they must see clearly the relation of their life-work to the common Christian task and fulfil it as members of the Christian fellowship.

If we are to make anything of the colossal task that awaits us, we must envisage it in this comprehensive way. There is not one task but many—all necessary, but all different, to be pursued by different methods and carried out by different groups of people. Failure to distinguish them clearly will keep us from tackling any one of them with the 'directness and concentration with which it must be taken in hand.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHURCHES AND THE NEW CHRISTENDOM

The Council on the Christian Faith and the Common Life

IT has already been stated that more than a year ago the Churches in this country agreed to set up a Council on the Christian Faith and the Common Life to enable them to deal more effectively with problems, the broad lineaments and urgency of which were becoming increasingly apparent. Organizations were already in existence to facilitate co-operation between the Churches in the promotion of social responsibility and social service and of international friendship and goodwill. But the resources at the disposal of these had always been inadequate, and the times seemed to demand a bold effort to secure wider and stronger support.

The Council is a small body of twenty-four members. Fourteen of these are appointed officially by the Churches, and the remaining ten are laymen and women co-opted by the Council with a view to representing the various spheres and activities of public and social life. The primary task of the Council is to establish more

vital connexions between the organized life and activities of the Church and the secular forces which are shaping the life of society.

In association with the Council there has been formed a larger body known as the Commission on International Friendship and Social Responsibility, consisting of eighty members representing the Churches, their various agencies (engaged in social service, the promotion of international friendship and the education of the Church constituencies), and the interdenominational Christian agencies. While the Council will be concerned in the main with opening up fresh ground, the principal task of the Commission will be to re-enforce existing Christian activities, to foster co-operation between them and to help them to gain a sense of common direction.

For the sake of brevity no attempt will be made in what follows to distinguish the respective shares of the Council and the Commission in carrying out the various tasks, and when the Council is mentioned it will be understood that the reference includes the work of the Commission.

There is also in process of formation a World Council of the Churches, with which the Council on the Christian Faith and the Common Life will closely co-operate and serve as the agency through which the activities of the World Council become effective in Great Britain.

A Central Rallying-Point

To understand the services which such a body as the new Council might render to the enterprise of a new Christendom, it is important to distinguish between a general and comprehensive function of the Council, and various specific tasks which it might undertake or help to promote.

The forces which will contribute to the shaping of a new Christendom are, of course, immeasurably wider in range than what can come within the province, or even the purview, of any Council. If a more Christian social order is achieved, it will be the result of the combined working of all agencies and efforts that are Christian in name or in spirit, and of the actions of hundreds of thousands of individuals in their own spheres of responsibility, great or small. No one would think of trying to relate this manifold, prolific effort to a single centre. There are bound to be many activities, contributing to the desired end, of even the existence of which a central body will remain unaware.

On the other hand an adequate, sustained effort on a national scale requires that there be a body whose function it is to try to see the enterprise as a whole. Some co-ordination of separate efforts is essential—not in the relatively superficial sphere of organization, which would be quite impracticable, but at the deeper levels of mutual

understanding and a common outlook and spirit. Conscious relatedness to a larger whole and direct contact with a centre representing that whole, and through it with other kindred activities, can bring to each particular undertaking a widened conception of its own task and a strengthened purpose. The flow of fruitful suggestion may be stimulated, and whatever gifts of creative insight and capacity the Church possesses in its different branches and members may be made in increasing measure available for all.

But beyond all this, and prior to it, is the immediate, urgent task of implanting in the mind of the nation the idea of a resurrection of Christendom. Both the people as a whole and the Churches themselves are as yet very little alive to the far-reaching issues that are at stake and the effort for which they call. The first necessity is to win intelligent assent to the idea.

No central agency can be in effective touch with more than a limited circle of persons. The population as a whole can be reached only by the Churches, the organizations connected with them, voluntary societies of many kinds and a multitude of individual collaborators throughout the entire range of the common life. But to stimulate this activity, and to sustain the morale of the movement, a central initiative is necessary.

The idea must be canvassed, and its deeper meanings explored, in repeated conversations

and discussions with those who, in an endless variety of ways, are helping to shape public opinion. When it is remembered that this includes the different Churches in their national and regional organization, the various agencies within the Churches, the inter-denominational Christian agencies, the statutory and voluntary social services in their many varieties, the universities, the various grades and types of education, literature, the Press, broadcasting, public administration, the professions, industry and commerce, and, when it is remembered further, that vital centres of these influences exist not only in London, but in all the principal towns, it will be seen that this function of the Council alone can be effectively carried out only if it has at its disposal a considerable staff.

The Religious Task

Let us look now at the tasks enumerated in the preceding chapter, the relation of the Churches to each of them and the ways in which such a body as the new Council might render assistance in carrying them out.

The re-awakening and reinforcement of Christian faith is the *sine qua non* of the coming into existence of a new Christendom. The preaching of the Christian Gospel as embodying the ultimate truth about the purpose of human

existence the interpretation of its meaning in relation to the whole life of society and the presentation of it in such a way as to confront men with the necessity of real decisions are the essential and indispensable tasks of the Church. No more fundamental influence can be brought to bear on society than by the fulfilment by the Church of its primary mission of calling men through the Gospel into the freedom of the sons of God and of nourishing the new life of the spirit through its teaching, sacraments and fellowship. It is through liberated and dedicated persons that fresh vitalizing energies are infused into society and renew its life.

In the fulfilment of the primary function of the Church there is a multitude of matters in regard to which opportunities of consultation and co-operation between the Churches, such as are furnished by the Council and Commission, may be expected to prove advantageous. These are so numerous and varied that to enter into detail would take a disproportionate amount of space.

A Social Philosophy

It has been urged in the preceding pages that the crying need of our time is for a clearly conceived social purpose, embodied in a widely accepted social philosophy which will inspire and direct practical activity.

It is not the function of the Church in its corporate capacity to evolve or endorse such a philosophy, except in regard to broad fundamental principles such as those suggested in an earlier chapter as Christian canons of judgment. Into any social philosophy which is related to the conditions of a particular time there must enter judgments of facts, tendencies and the practical working of institutions, on which the Church as an ecclesiastical body is not competent to pronounce. Moreover the elaboration of a social and political philosophy is a task to be undertaken not so much by the clergy, though individuals among them may make valuable contributions, as by those whose experience lies in the various secular spheres of thought and action. It is a task in which in the conditions of a mixed society Christians must collaborate with those who do not call themselves Christians.

But while it is not the responsibility of the Church in its corporate capacity to produce such a philosophy, it is a vital interest of the Church that it should without fail be produced. There will come into existence a social faith and purpose leavened and enriched by Christian insights and values only if Christians take an initiative and active responsibility in creating them. It is therefore incumbent on the Church to lay this responsibility on its members and to afford them help in discharging it.

The matter is thus one in which the Church is at once vitally interested and not directly competent. The only escape from this dilemma is one of which no adequate trial has ever yet been made. It is that the Church should make appropriate provision for getting certain things done, which it cannot itself undertake, but which are necessary for its own life and health.

It may be said that many individual Christian thinkers, scholars and men of practical affairs are already making their contribution and that there is nothing further to be done; that the social and political faith that is needed will emerge when the time is ripe and that such matters are best left to take care of themselves. But if a social purpose impregnated with Christian ideas and values is of such crucial importance to the Christian cause, positive measures ought to be taken to further it. The impact of the Christian mind on the thought of our time would surely be strengthened if opportunities are provided for those who can contribute to the task to share their ideas and co-operate in a common plan, and if active steps are taken to increase the number of those consciously dedicated to such a service. In this field there are large and important tasks waiting to be undertaken by such a body as the new Council.

Widespread Initiative

The independent initiative on the part of hundreds of thousands of people which is indispensable, if a more Christian society is to come into being, is bound, as has already been indicated, to make new demands on the ministries of the Church. These lie chiefly in two directions. The first is for a growing awareness of the significance of these endeavours of the Christian laity as an essential expression of the life of the Church. We must by a strong effort get rid of our habitual tendency to think of the Church almost entirely in terms of its ecclesiastical functions in contrast with other interests and activities of man's life, and consequently to relate everything to that one centre. We must acquire a new habit of conceiving the life of the Church as having two foci—one in the act of worship and the ministry of preaching and teaching, and the other in the life of its members serving God in the practical activities of daily life. This will lead, in the second place, to an eager devising of new means of providing encouragement, guidance and help to those who in endlessly different ways are making their individual contribution to the transformation of society.

It is vain to look for a new Christendom unless within the various industries and professions there is an active questioning how far present policy

and practice are contributory or prejudicial to the end in view. There is need of a ferment of thought out of which would emerge an increasingly definite code of behaviour for each specific area of human activity. Some of the older professions have an honourable tradition which Christian influence has helped to shape. In recent times the question of professional standards has received attention both from Christian organizations and within certain industries. But the efforts of the former have been limited by inadequate resources, and in the latter case there has sometimes been little conscious connexion with fundamental Christian insights.

In a creative movement on the part of the Church to meet these needs and opportunities help and stimulus can be given by a central body which is able to survey the field as a whole. Wise planning and concentration on key positions might be the means of setting in motion fresh vitalizing currents in the life of society.

The Contribution of Science

For the scientific task referred to in the preceding chapter the Church as a corporate society has no direct responsibility, any more than for other activities of the secular life. But there is abundant room for a clearer and more

widespread understanding of the relation of scientific knowledge to the distinctive ministries of the Church, both as supplementing these at other levels and ranges of man's life, and as supplying a needed corrective and enrichment of many of the traditional methods and practices of religious education. The power conferred by scientific knowledge to control nature, the social environment and man himself is perhaps the chief point at which Christian faith has to come to terms with modern civilization.

The Gospel of God

The Church is the recipient and minister of a Gospel which proclaims God to be Light and Love. The project of a new Christendom stands or falls with the truth of that assertion. We may not identify the purpose of God with what may appear to our finite intelligence to be desirable. It is not for us to know times and seasons which the Father has set within His own authority. But neither, on the other hand, can we set any term to what might be accomplished in the regeneration of human life by a body of men and women who believed to the last fibre of their being in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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